

the space between the huts, neatly smeared with dung, separated off from the next by a low wall, sometimes less than a foot high, or the remains of what was once a wall. Not all villages give an appearance of neatness. Sometimes, especially after a rainy season, the huts are dilapidated and greatly in need of repair; courtyards may be untidy-looking and only partially smeared, while often in summer flies are a veritable pest. It is considered unlucky to kill them. Native ideas of cleanliness also differ from those of Europeans: it is considered nothing for a baby to urinate on the hut floor, while hours spent in smoky huts give the cloths and blankets worn by women an unpleasant odour. Each household, the domain of a married woman, is independent, having its own fields and granaries. The household of the chief wife is opposite the main entrance; on either side of her in Raselaka's village are her two fellow wives; further to her left are the households of an orphaned sister's son to the village head, married to one of his daughters, and of his eldest son, whose wife is still cooking for her mother-in-law and has as yet no cooking hut. To the right, beyond the third wife of Raselaka, lives a stranger, Letavula, with his wife and mother. There is an extra hut for the young boys of the village and one behind the rest belonging to a woman 'married' to the second wife of Raselaka. The Lovedu have no ranking of wives apart from the chief wife (the mother's brother's daughter) and there is no division of the village into right- and left-hand sides as among Zulu.

There are well marked differences even on the outside between cooking and sleeping or reception huts. The latter all face the *khoro* and have a wooden door; they are well plastered, many having a veranda all round. The former have their backs to the *khoro*, a framework of reeds as a door, and are more roughly made, very often unplastered on the outside, so that the framework of wooden posts is clearly visible. On entering a sleeping hut, you find yourself in a pleasing apartment. The floor, the greater portion of which is generally to the level of a foot higher than that of the entrance, is well smeared, while beside the wall are one or two raised platforms used to place things on and sometimes also as seats. The well-plastered walls merge into the roof, forming a white dome. This dome has circular rims marking the cross-laths which, beneath the plaster, hold together the framework of closely packed rafters. Sometimes there are mural decorations and at intervals an outjutting shelf of clay or a peg. The floor of the hut of Raselaka is empty except for a double or waisted basket (*khirudwana*), a wooden platter of food, a lantern, and two smart suitcases. But on the shelves are blankets, a rolled-up sleeping-mat, some clothes and beadwork of the wife, and on the walls a calendar and a coloured picture of the King and Queen of England. You must not expect to find this latter sophistication in many villages, but likewise the smooth, plastered dome is now uncommon. New Government regulations against the cutting of trees for wood, and the men's general disinclination to put much work into a building they will inhabit only at intervals, between periods of service in the towns, are combining with other factors to doom to extinction these beautifully made huts. That of Letavula, newer than the others, is an ordinary *rondavel* with unplastered roof and supporting beams. He had a European bed, but has discarded it as too cold in winter.

583 There are scores of aspects we cannot even touch upon. There are rules as to the kind of cattle or other beasts that may properly be used as *munywalo*: the rules may seem curious to us, but they have their reason in social and other arrangements. The number seven is taboo, for [80] the seventh finger 'points', as does a witch when he says, 'You'll see,' and it is wrong so to point at one's in-laws, with whom co-operation is essential. Similarly, as the size of the testicles of full-grown male animals [825] is an insult, because it is a challenge, such uncastrated animals cannot be part of the *munywalo*. So also yellowish cattle presage jealousies between co-wives; they will cause the bride to run away. Marriage is patrilocal, otherwise a man is said 'to have been married by his wife'; it is good to live near, but not too near, one's wife's people; for, if proximity is an economic and social advantage, to live under the roof of the parents-in-law is to relinquish all authority in one's own home. Generally speaking, the bride's family do not call the bridegroom to help them with actual work, such as building huts or ploughing. But the idea of service instead of, or in addition to, *munywalo* is faintly reflected in the fact that men now still living were required towards the end of the ceremonial to build a hut for their parents-in-law. The rule was that, when a bridegroom had completed the hut, he climbed to the roof and refused to come down until the bride was immediately released to go home with him and she by greeting (*hu lsha*) signified her willingness to come. Such a hut in case of divorce counted as one head of cattle. And perhaps we should add, though it is clearly implied in all we have said, that no one except the boy's parents contributes and no one except the house of the girl's mother receives the *munywalo*. More than that, a man cannot help the son of one house by taking the cattle of another, for it is said, 'One house cannot eat the property of another,' though this, as everything else, is subject to the supreme principle that 'if they agree', the rigidity of the rule may be relaxed. It may involve difficult readjustments, but agreement is conceived as being able to overcome the difficulties. Sometimes also a relative who has brought up the bride is given one of the beasts of her *munywalo*, but it is not a custom as in many tribes, it is merely a matter of agreement.

581 The sexual aspect of marriage is treated with great moderation. Among us, where love looms large and represents a romantic ideal when we are young, it more often than not ends in disillusionment when we are old. The structure of Lovedu society lays no stress upon sexual compatibility, and marriage almost completely ignores sexual adjustments. Co-operation and agreement as regards its main purposes, both economic and structural, not companionship of husband and wife, is the ideal. Agreement is the watchword of the society, the guarantee of harmonious relations between spouses as well as co-wives. In describing the possible relations and dispositions within the family, no phrase is more frequently used than the phrase, 'if they agree'. No custom, no rule, no arrangement, decreed by the laws of the family, are absolute; and because the *khoro* judicial proceedings deal with difficulties in the family and in the social structure, they also are guided and controlled by agreement and compromises. And so it is agreement, not sexual compatibility, which is the

- 769 Offerings may be poured on the ground or on *thugula* objects. Some-
 782 times, however, the ancestors desire a shrine or a dedicated animal. The
 825 queen herself and some others have dedicated cattle, male or female,
 according to the spirit represented; a few families have sheep, while the
 majority have goats. Fowls are neither dedicated nor killed for the gods.
 But we have one instance of a dedicated snake, that in the Relela family,
 to which in 1939, at their burial grounds in the depths of the forest,
 libations were offered when the *nyali* initiation began in that district; the
 conception is wholly alien to the Lovedu, though the Relela have been
 so long linked with, as to be indistinguishable from, them; and the snake,
 said to whistle, is described as like that dreaded monster, the 'mountain
 snake' which is often thought of as a mamba but strikes terror like the
 omen it is. The use of these different animals is traditional in, and bears
 no relation to the wealth of, the families concerned; some have a dedicated
 animal, others merely a shrine, while many have both. The dedicated
 animal receives the name of an ancestor, father or grandfather in the case
 of the head of the lineage, or of any complaining spirit that has demanded
 such *thugula*, and it is believed that his spirit (*muya*) has entered into it.
 Some dedicated animals are credited with abnormal powers: Mamujaji's
 agitation one day, while being driven to the dip, correctly presaged un-
 pleasantness with the dip inspector; Malegudu is the fiercest bull in the
 land, like the warrior whom he represents. Though some people uncere-
 moniously pour beer-offerings down the throat of dedicated animals, it is
 generally claimed that, unlike ordinary animals, they readily drink beer,
 but the claim is contradicted by the mealie leaves put over the beer to
 coax the animal to drink. In 1938, when Malegudu, called from the herd
 to drink the harvest beer, remained immovable, every one was afraid to
 approach him, but it was considered sufficient to throw the beer over him
 from a distance, so that by licking himself he might partake of the offering.
- 778 Shrines, which are to be found generally on the left-hand side of the
 entrance to the sleeping hut of the chief wife, vary in appearance and
 contents. A shrine may consist of a small mound of earth, containing the
 bones of a sacrificial goat; it may be a sacred plant or tree, usually *fitigwani*
 (*Hypoxis villosa*) or *lesme* (*Haemanthus* sp.) and *mutabu* (*Ficus capensis*),
 a black river stone, a long stick, or even a piece of a certain kind of ant
 heap (*khiñhom*). The queen's own shrine is a mound under which are
 buried the bones of a goat slaughtered some twenty years ago when it was
 set up. Mashishimali's shrine contains no bones, but consists of a *fitigwani*
 lily and a river stone, both visible above ground. Ramatiti has three
 shrines and one dedicated goat, all of which have arisen out of illness
 caused by ancestral complaints. Of the first, the shrine of his father,
 nothing is visible above ground; it consists of a buried piece of ant-heap,
 used instead of a goat because Ramatiti is not the chief son, who should
 have the dedicated animal, and a black river stone which keeps the spirit
 cool and appeased (lying down), as well as the three plant substances
 [824] *mufera*, *lesogo* (*Alipedia* sp.?), *vulevaja*, which are placed in most shrines
 to make the ancestors 'forget'. The other two are mounds containing the
 bones and heads of goats, one representing his mother, the other, like the
 live goat, his mother's brother, his wife's father.

of their illness. Night-witches are not often seen by people, but there is ⁷⁵⁴ certain medicine which can be put in the village fence to keep a night-witch rooted to the spot, unable to move till you come and find him. As soon as he is addressed, he will scurry away. Those who have seen witches, always describe them as naked, perhaps because people always sleep naked wrapped in their blankets. The most effective way of keeping witches at bay is the placing of medicine (*diphaba*) round the village fence, which either makes them forget their errand or makes the village appear like water or a forest.

Night-witches cause all manner of illness in ways unknown to ordinary people. They may pour blood over you, then next day you are ill; your blood is not right and soon you die. They may cut off portions of your body to insert millet or sand, which causes intense pain. If your bones ache and you feel tired without knowing why, it may be that a night-witch has made you hoe in his garden all night or beaten you all over your body with sticks. Sometimes he even makes you ride a bicycle all night. Besides killing, night-witches are fond of causing barrenness in their enemies. They are great destroyers of crops. After you have ploughed, they go into your field and pick up all the seeds so that nothing grows, or they rob your field of its fertility to increase that of their own fields. They also send their familiars at night to milk your cows or let them out of their kraal to cause damage that may bring you to court. Night-witches form a sort of fraternity: they all know one another and meet at night to drum and dance for amusement. They also fight one another: those of an area in which the crops have failed will send wind to break mealies and trees in another area or worms to destroy the crop. The destructiveness of such contests is a reality to some, for in one district in which many worms appeared in the mealies, so we heard, a public meeting was held and one man accused Shangana-Tonga witches, whom he said he had seen the previous night. Often a real battle against foreign witches takes place in which wounds are received that the witch does his best to hide during the day. Witches have even been known to die from wounds received in battle at night, as sometimes admitted by themselves.

Night-witches employ familiars (*dithomya*) such as the hyena, the snake, ⁷⁵⁹ the *muishond* (*Pacilogale albinucha*), and, to a lesser extent, owls and ⁸²⁵ the striped *muishond* (*Ictonyx capensis*): both kinds of *muishond* are polecats or skunks. How the witch tames these animals is not known, but they become so intimate that they come at night to ask for food and call the witch their mother, but there is no sex relationship between witch and familiar as is reported for the Pondo. Two actual cases were reported to the queen while we were in the field in which 'sent' snakes had been killed; one of these had been found to contain porridge and relish, certain proof of its association with a witch. The difference between an ordinary snake which also bites and a 'sent' snake appears from the circumstances: if, for example, others walk along a path before you and escape, but you get bitten, then the snake must be 'sent'. For 'sent' snakes are real snakes; the Zulu practice of smearing medicine on sticks to turn them into snakes when your enemy passes is not known to the Lovedu. The most fearful of all familiars is, however, the *khidugwane*, a ⁷⁵⁴

to kill us by poisoning and starving us, because they dislike hearing the groaning of a sick man. They will not allow us to go into the sun when we are getting well. The nurses ill-treat us if we do what we think is right. We get no filling food and our only enjoyment, conversation with one another, is repressed by the command to "shut up". So profound is the suspicion, that one of our good friends died rather than go to hospital, while another, who had sustained a compound fracture, was persuaded to accept our advice to be taken to a European doctor only at the very last moment.

Yet let us not forget that in 1939 a tribal 'Cabinet' was set up and one of its 'ministers' was the guardian of health. His last message to us was that, in accordance with a decision of the 'Cabinet', he 'was watching the diet of the capital and had decided upon strictly prohibiting the running about of fowls'. By old and still persisting custom, it should be mentioned, fowls are not allowed in the capital, because, it is said, they are dirty animals.

Western culture hardly undermines magic and witchcraft: police boys use magic to ward off 'the spears of their enemies', guns are 'doctored' to make them shoot straight and even the inadequacies of European justice are compensated by magic (*hu nicela*). In this respect the culture has met the challenge, however inappropriately from our point of view. But it has failed to handle successfully the spirit of modern inquiry found among those who have been to school or have been stimulated by their experiences in the towns. Young men do not understand the long process of growing into a culture and ask questions which the old men cannot or will not answer. These young men, who judge by the standards of the little learning which is a dangerous thing, tend to despise what is not made intelligible to them. In their eyes, for instance, the mysteries of the *digma* and the *swidajani* are shams, and the fact that no knowledge is imparted in the circumcision 'schools' condemns them as nonsense. This attitude and the inadequate response to it lead to lack of respect both for traditional values and old people. But the total effect is minimized by the reassertion of the old values as the young men grow older and begin to become part of and have a stake in the culture. Moreover, inquisitiveness is stamped as the immaturity, almost imbecility, of youth, and the insinuation that the doubts are due to the white man's insidious influence goes far to repress them as unworthy and disloyal.

In this book we have described Lovedu culture as it is to-day, touching but cursorily in the present chapter upon the changes that have occurred or the trends that are apparent in some groups of people. We have seen that the interpenetration in the pre-European period has effected far greater institutional changes than in the European period. Even the incorporation of the cult of spirit possession, which came twenty years after the European, represents a far greater direct evolution than the changes in forms brought about by the Christian religion. The feature of pre-European merging has been incorporation, with modifications, of culture elements and the reciprocal effect upon existing institutions and culture elements. The feature of European penetration, except in material

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An omen or bane (*lesola*) presages death or disaster, but it may itself be the cause of the evil that follows. An owl hooting outside a hut, cats crying plaintively (not caterwauling) at night, presage disaster, for cats have uncanny insight; a mountain snake can be a *lesola*, and so can a *leshega*, i.e. a person whose teeth have appeared in the wrong order. A person will *tola* another, i.e. cause misfortune or death to descend upon a member of the latter's family, by swearing badly at him, especially if the words are out of all proportion to the offence or provocation.

These concepts of natural luck, accident, and omens are thus also linked with human relationships. Good relations with near relatives may bring you good luck, bad relations, especially with your father or father's sister, bad luck or illness to your children. In fact any man who despises the great, particularly his father, will, it is said, see him in the bones as the cause of his misfortune, especially if the old man dies before a reconciliation has been effected. An old man's scolding or curse is an omen (*vusola*) which portends and causes misfortune to a near relative of the person scolded, and the grievance of one's sister or father's sister, even if it is unconscious, generates a force (*mahava*) which brings illness upon one's children and which can be neutralized only by a religious rite. The exact relation between *mahava* and the ancestors is not very clear. The Lovedu conceive *mahava* as following automatically from the bad relationship between important kin. Yet reconciliation, which removes the source of the *mahava*, is not enough for putting matters right. It is the ancestors that must remove the illness at the request of the aggrieved party.

Witchcraft and Sorcery (Vulsi)

The evils that have so far been mentioned are either inherent in nature or only vaguely brought into relation with the conduct and relationships between men. Their effects except in a few cases are mild, rarely ending in death. In a completely different category is the greatest and most devastating source of evil *vulsi* (witchcraft and sorcery), brought about directly by man. *Vulsi* is, by Lovedu conceptions, always due to the conscious, evil practices of man and is directed at persons he has reason to hate.¹ *Vulsi* is morally reprehensible, and witches and sorcerers are the arch enemies of society. The concept of *vulsi* explains evil in terms of the malicious wickedness in men's hearts; it is criminality incarnate in man. The term *vulsi* covers both witchcraft and sorcery; nevertheless the Lovedu make a clear distinction between witchcraft (*vulsi vya vusiu*—night witchcraft) and sorcery (*vulsi vya matsiare*—day witchcraft). The night-witch uses sinister inherited powers which extend beyond the ordinary course of nature. The sorcerer uses the natural, known powers of medicine for anti-social ends. Witchcraft implies possession of power to do evil transcending the under-

¹ Neighbouring Venda and Tsonga conceive the witch as constrained to evil by heredity but unconscious of his own evil acts.